

Suspension Procedure – Principles & Practice

This is a guideline to be read in conjunction with the Procedure for the Suspension of Staff and any decision to suspend a staff member must follow due process. Suspension can be distressing for the individual concerned and for this reason it should be conducted with the dignity of the individual in mind and only enforced where absolutely necessary.

1. Suspension is not disciplinary action

Individuals are reminded that suspension is necessary in certain circumstances, but does not constitute any assumption of guilt on their part or disciplinary action. Any period of suspension or redeployment is on full contractual pay for this reason as it ensures no unexpected financial loss is suffered.

2. Preliminary Investigation

Before referring the matter to the Vice Chancellor, the Dean of Faculty/ Head of Service should immediately contact the HR Department and, with their guidance ensure a swift preliminary investigation is undertaken to gather as much information as possible relating to the allegation and ensure an informed decision is made.

3. Only when necessary

Where appropriate, alternatives to suspension should be considered which may include temporary redeployment or relocation, restricting the staff member's duties or allowing them to work from home.

4. Practical Arrangements

If a decision to suspend is made the practical arrangements for suspension must be followed, taking due consideration to preserving the dignity of the person involved, the confidentiality of the situation, the duty of care to other staff members and students and only taking action as far as is necessary.

- a) In line with the Procedure for the Suspension of staff, a letter must be prepared setting out the grounds on which the decision to suspend has been made.
- b) If a suspension meeting is possible, this must take place in private and will usually be face-to-face. Where this is not possible the staff member may be informed via telephone or in writing. They may immediately seek the advice of a colleague and/or Union Representative.
- c) It should be explained to the staff member who they will be allowed to communicate with while they are on suspension. Taking account for their need for support and advice from their Union Representative or colleague as appropriate.
- d) Consideration should be given to whether there is a need to safeguard relevant documents, records and other items of University property and how this will be done. Where relevant this should be communicated to the staff member.
- e) If there is a need to accompany the staff member back to the workplace to collect their personal belongings and/or escort them off the premises this should be communicated clearly to the staff member.
- f) If there is a need to limit or remove access to IT systems or need for an auto response message on emails consideration should be given to how this will be done and if relevant communicated to the staff member.

- g) Any communication to staff, students or to external audiences should consider the staff members dignity, right to privacy and the principle that suspension does not constitute any assumption of guilt.

5. Support Arrangements

Throughout the suspension, the staff member should be given as much information as possible about the allegations. At the suspension meeting, due sensitivity should be given to reactions from the staff member including shock, stress and distress. They should also be made aware of the support mechanisms in place including Occupational Health, Chaplaincy, the Counselling Service, the Employee Assistance Program and their Union Representative. In agreement with the staff member, the Dean of Faculty/ Head of Service may wish to identify a suitable work colleague to keep the suspended staff member up-to-date with work related issues. Their role will not be to discuss the investigation or reason for suspension and they should not be involved in any associated investigation procedure.

6. Review of Suspension

Any period of suspension should be for the shortest time possible and regularly reviewed to establish if it is still necessary, and in line with the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

7. Return to Work

The member of staff may feel anxious about returning to work following suspension and the Dean of Faculty/ Head of Service, in conjunction with the HR Department, is responsible for ensuring their return to work is carefully planned and supported. It may be helpful for the staff member, their manager and/or a member of the HR Department to have a one-to-one meeting prior to their return to agree the arrangements and how their return is communicated.